

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 594

JC 800 010

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 TITLE Proposal for Creating the Position of Transfer Officer at LCCC.
 INSTITUTION Lorain County Community Coll., Elyria, Ohio.
 PUB DATE 11 Feb 74
 NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Academic Persistence; *Administrator Role; *Articulation (Education); College Choice; College Credits; *College Transfer Students; *Community Colleges; Educational Counseling; Grades (Scholastic); Information Needs; Institutional Cooperation; Institutional Research; Occupational Information; *Research Needs; Student Problems; Transfer Policy; Two Year Colleges
 IDENTIFIERS *Transfer Officers

ABSTRACT

The position of Transfer Officer should be created at Lorain County Community College (LCCC) to assist transfer students in selecting four-year institutions and college majors which are appropriate to their ability and prior achievement, and to conduct research relevant to students who have transferred from LCCC to other institutions. The Transfer Officer would examine current articulation policies and agreements concerning admissions requirements at four-year colleges, gather information about transferring credits and grades, encourage the pre-evaluation of all courses offered at LCCC by potential transfer institutions, and assist these schools in developing informational materials for prospective LCCC transfer students. In addition, the Transfer Officer would conduct research in areas related to: (1) the characteristics of students who persist and graduate from different types of institutions; (2) the grade point differentials between LCCC and each four-year institution to which a sizable number of LCCC students transfer; (3) the problems of course and curriculum articulation; and (4) the academic, financial, and motivational problems which frequently cause transfer students to withdraw. Such efforts would promote the success of transfer students and demonstrate the strength of LCCC's commitment to transfer education. (JP)

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PROPOSAL FOR CREATING THE POSITION OF TRANSFER OFFICER AT LCCC

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Lorain County Community College
Elyria, Ohio
February 11, 1974

JC 800 010

Proposal for Creating the Position of Transfer Officer at LCCC

One of the functions of community colleges for many years has been to prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The extensive nationwide study conducted by Knoell and Medsker indicated that although many students entered community colleges intending to transfer, they did not decide on specific transfer institutions until they had completed at least one year at the community colleges.¹ Knoell and Medsker found that "the particular four-year college in which the transfer student decided to pursue his degree program appeared to be a very major factor in his success in attaining the baccalaureate degree."² The conclusion reached as a result of this finding and the implications of that conclusion were as follows:

Conclusion: All or most junior college students could be successful in achieving their degree goals after transfer if they would select four-year institutions and major fields which are appropriate to their ability and prior achievement. In every state there is probably at least one four-year college in which each transfer student with a C average in junior college could succeed, if properly financed and motivated. However, a large number of students are transferring to an inappropriate institution, i.e., to a college in which they have a very low probability of success in earning satisfactory grades and thus in achieving their baccalaureate degree objectives.

Implications: The proper matching of transfer student and institution at the upper division level is just as important a goal as the matching of high school graduate and institution at the freshman level. The former is probably even more important than the latter, since fewer mistakes in choice can be remedied during the junior and senior years in college, particularly when students fail. More information should be obtained on a continuing basis concerning the relative success of transfer students in different types of four-year colleges and programs. More

¹Knoell, Dorothy M., and Medsker, Leland L., Factors Affecting Performance of Transfer Students From Two- to Four-Year Colleges: With Implications for Coordination and Articulation, Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, 1964, p. 175.

²Knoell, Dorothy M., and Medsker, Leland L., Articulation Between Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges, Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, 1964, p. 93.

effective ways of using such information need to be conceived in counseling and admissions programs. All too little is known about decision-making concerning college attendance and transfer by the students and their parents, with or without the help of counselors. Planners need to know why mistakes are made in choosing transfer institutions and how they might be avoided. On a more philosophic plane, there is a need to evaluate the extent to which both society and the students themselves can afford such mistakes, within the context of preserving maximum freedom of opportunity for higher education.³

Blocker, et. al., have emphasized the importance of providing potential transfer students with information about the policies and practices of the institutions to which they might transfer:

Many transfer students will require special attention in order that their transfer, without loss of credit and with good chances of success, may be facilitated. A collection of college catalogs to which the student may be referred is essential, but not enough. The two-year college must also maintain close contact with four-year institutions through conferences and a follow-up program to insure the availability of continuous, accurate information on their standards and admission policies.⁴

The purpose of this paper is to propose the creation of the position of transfer officer at LCCC. Upon entering college, many students indicate that they plan to transfer to a four-year institution. Not all of these students will apply to transfer and several will not have the grades to transfer; these students will need to consider other alternatives. For this reason, and for ease in follow-up studies of graduates and other students who leave LCCC, it is suggested that the transfer officer work closely with the placement officer.

The main responsibilities of the transfer officer would be two-fold:

³Ibid., p. 105.

⁴Blocker, Clyde E., Plummer, Robert H., and Richardson, Jr., Richard C., The Two-Year College: A Social Synthesis, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965, pp. 251-252.

- (1) to assist students who wish to transfer to other institutions;
- (2) to conduct research relevant to students who have transferred from LCCC to other institutions.

The responsibilities are closely related and, in many instances, interdependent. The transfer officer would need to examine current articulation policies and agreements and to develop policies and agreements where appropriate. He should be able to answer the following questions, among others, concerning each institution to which LCCC students transfer:

- What is required to apply for admission? (For example, are high school transcripts required, ACT scores, etc.?)
- What is the basis for acceptance for admission?
- Will the institution accept the Associate degree in total?
- How are transfer credits determined? (Is it a course-by-course evaluation? Are courses in which "D" grades have been earned accepted for transfer credit? Is credit awarded through proficiency examination?)
- What is the maximum amount of transfer credit that will apply to one's major?
- Does grade point average transfer?
- May credit be earned for field experience and independent study?
- What are the expenses at the transfer institution?
- What are the financial aid and employment opportunities?
- In addition, the transfer officer should know whether the institution has an orientation program for transfer student, whether there are advisory services specifically designed for transfer students, and whether there are transfer-oriented academic programs by field of study.

He should, in cooperation with faculty and administrators, encourage a pre-evaluation of all courses offered at LCCC by potential transfer institutions. He should assist potential transfer institutions in developing pamphlets or handbooks for prospective LCCC transfer students. He should

also be prepared to assist occupationally-oriented students who might decide to transfer.

Several specific areas for research have been suggested as a result of the Knoell and Medsker study and the appropriate conclusions and implications are cited below:

Conclusion: The effects of diversity in higher education--in the quality of the entering students, level of instruction, types of programs, climate for learning, and pursuits of the faculty--all are reflected in the differential performance of the transfer students. No single meaningful conclusion can really be drawn about the quality of transfer student performance because of the vast differences which were found among the 41 four-year institutions, and among the 10 states. Transfer students with very similar grades from the same junior college, often in the same major field, will have quite different degrees of success in different four-year institutions, in terms of both their persistence to graduation and their upper division grades. Diversity among institutions will probably increase as a function of greater state-wide coordination and as institutions are encouraged to develop along particular lines to serve a specific clientele.

Implications: There is need to study the characteristics of the students who persist and graduate from different types of institutions, as well as the students who are admitted as freshmen. Colleges should analyze the composition, characteristics, and achievement of their graduating classes, to find out what kinds of students are successful in their programs. It is false to assume that a junior college student with a C average will do equally well in all four-year institutions, in all programs, or that he will be able in all instances to compete successfully with native students who may have greater ability. Diversity of opportunity needs to be developed at the junior and senior levels, to accommodate the heterogeneity of talent and interest which is present in the very large groups of junior college students who plan to transfer to four-year institutions.⁵

Conclusion: Grade-point differentials are one of the realities of university life which transfer students to these institutions should be prepared to accept, at least during their first year after transfer. However, junior college students are transferring to many different types of four-year colleges, with different grading standards and with varying differentials. Most students will suffer some drop in grades in their first semester after transfer but the size of the drop and the degree of improvement thereafter varies with the institution. A

⁵Knoell and Medsker, Articulation Between Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges, pp. 105-106.

particular junior college will probably have a near zero differential with some institutions and a fairly sizeable negative differential with others, all within the same state. Significant positive differentials will be fairly rare and might be viewed with some concern as possible indicators of overly tough junior college grading standards.

Implications: Each junior college should examine annually its grade-point differentials with each four-year college to which a sizeable number of its students transfer, before attempting to evaluate and perhaps to tamper with its grading standards. Because of the status factor, the temptation is strong to try to reduce the differential with the major state university of near-zero, while ignoring differentials with other types of four-year colleges. However, any arbitrary attempt to close the gap with the major universities could result in the denial of opportunity to many transfer students who are now succeeding in various types of colleges. A more realistic goal is the achievement of a differential which most transfer students can "afford," i.e., a drop in grades which will not result in an average below C. Transfer students whose junior college average is only 2.3 can ill afford a differential of $-.5$; however, a group whose average is 2.8 could experience a drop in grades of this magnitude without fear of probation and dismissal.

If good junior college students are not alerted to the possibility that their grades will drop after transfer, they may become discouraged and even withdraw, though in good standing. There is clearly no simple approach to evaluating grade-point differentials or to bringing about desired changes in them, but it would be wise to view these differentials as very rough indicators of both grading and admissions standards in the two- and four-year colleges.⁶

Conclusion: There is no reason why junior college transfer students should require more time and units than native students to complete their degree programs, if the two- and four-year colleges work together on problems of articulation of their courses and curricula. Junior college students may be older than their native counterparts when they finish their degrees, for one or several reasons--high school deficiencies to be made up before starting college-level courses, exploration in junior college before choosing a major or transfer program, part-time enrollment or withdrawal while earning money to continue their education, and late decisions to attend college, among others. However, recent high school graduates who enter college without deficiencies and enroll on a full-time basis, who choose their major and transfer institution not later than the end of their freshmen year, should be able to progress through their two-plus-two program at the same rate of speed as their classmates in four-year institutions.

Implications: The junior college is and should remain essentially a two-year institution, offering approximately half the baccalaureate

⁶Ibid., p. 108.

degree program. However, despite restrictions on the amount of credit which can be transferred to four-year colleges, most students should be urged to remain in junior college until they can transfer with full upper division standing, with all lower division requirements met and with various pre-requisites satisfied. While the situation was good when the 1960 group moved through their degree programs, it probably could be improved if the junior colleges would study the detailed performance records of their transfer students. An analysis of the records would in many instances reveal specific transfer problems which could be remedied quite easily, thus enabling an even larger number of transfer students to graduate on time and also avoiding the loss of some students who drop out lacking only some minor requirement which often could have been met in junior college.⁷

Conclusion: Attrition after transfer, for all causes, is higher than it ought to be and could probably be reduced through joint efforts on the part of the two- and four-year colleges. Factors related to attrition are multiple and complex, but the reasons given by the transfer students for dropping out as juniors and seniors have somewhat more face validity than those given by most freshmen and sophomores who feel they must save face when withdrawing. Factors of unsatisfactory grades, financial instability, and insufficient motivation or interest frequently combine to produce withdrawal among the transfer students. Thus, the same factors which directed them to junior colleges as freshmen, rather than to four-year institutions, later bring about their withdrawal as juniors and seniors.

Implications: As noted previously, a sizeable reduction in attrition could be produced by means of a better matching of transfer students and four-year colleges, with the objective of getting each student into an institution where he has a better-than-even chance of success. However, unless a different approach is made to the administration of financial aid to transfer students, many who are now attempting to complete baccalaureate degree programs without adequate financial resources would be well advised to make other plans. Transfer to most four-year colleges involves a cash outlay of a totally different magnitude than junior college expenses. Many students are transferring with little or no family backing, very limited savings on which to draw, and no workable solution for financing their education beyond the first semester or year in the four-year college. The drop in grades which many experience after transfer makes them even less likely to be able to obtain the needed funds to continue, through either part-time employment or assistance from the university.

Finally, one of the major reasons the students attend junior college as freshmen is their lack of motivation or uncertainty about their interests in or capability for baccalaureate degree programs. After transfer, many drop out for these same reasons. They complain about a lack of assistance from counselors and other staff members

⁷Ibid., p. 110.

in working through their motivational problems, including frequent disappointment in their chosen major or profession, conflicting values, personal problems, and others. One possible implication is that the junior college should permit and perhaps encourage their former students to return to talk through their problems with former counselors and instructors. In any event, the two-year investment which has been made in these transfer students could produce a much higher pay-off for them and for society, if somewhat greater assistance in various forms were provided when they leave the junior college.⁸

There are, of course, many relevant areas for research other than those suggested above. The point is that LCCC has a responsibility to its students who intend to transfer that is as serious as its responsibility for its occupationally-oriented students. Although several studies have been undertaken showing that LCCC students have little difficulty transferring credits and do relatively well the first term after transfer, no one knows how many have actually persisted to the baccalaureate degree, how long it has taken them, and what problems they have encountered along the way.

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⁸Ibid., pp. 110-111.